



CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING PROGRAM

COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION • NEW WESTMINSTER POLICE SERVICE

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It Pays to Go Crime Free!

The *Crime Free Multi-Housing Program* has been operating in New Westminster since 1995. There are currently 57 properties in the city that have successfully passed through the three phases of the program to gain Certified status.

In recognition of the positive impacts the Program has in reducing criminal and nuisance activities in those properties that participate, the City of New Westminster has re-

duced the business license fees for Certified properties by 10%, effective January 1, 2005.

The Program also benefits these buildings by reducing tenant turnover, reducing vandalism and improving the living environment. Buildings that are not currently certified are encouraged to take the necessary steps towards certification. Contact the Crime Free Coordinator at 604-529-2494 for more information.

To Serve & Protect

The Police in our community are committed to enhancing public safety and working with the community to reduce incidents of crime. In managing a multi-unit apartment building there will be times when the police are called to attend to incidents from either a third party, who may have heard or seen suspicious activity, or from the residents themselves to attend to a concern of theirs.

As the manager of the building, you should be concerned about the safety and security of the property and residents living inside. It is only natural to be inquisitive about the nature of a police visit. However there is a right way to approach this.

Take this scenario: A call comes into the police about a domestic argument with a possible assault. Police ring the manager's intercom and request entry. As a security conscious manager, you tell the officer you will be right down to let them in. Do not quiz them while on the intercom. Police may ask you for information about the persons living in the suite they plan to visit and may offer the reason for the visit. This is not the time for you to ask questions. It is a time for you to be helpful and offer your assistance.

You should return to your suite unless requested by the officers to accompany them. You should request that the of-

ficers visit your suite when their business is concluded. The officers will then answer your questions, within reasonable bounds of privacy, and give you a business card with the file number.

If you are away from the building when the police attend to a call, you may contact the Crime Free Multi-Housing coordi-

nator for the file number and attending officer. Information such as the suite number and individuals involved in the report is confidential under the *Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act*.

More information on what to expect from police when attending to calls on your property, how to identify illegal activity and other crime prevention and residential management issues are covered at the **Crime Free Multi-Housing Workshop** on February 16, 2005 at the Justice Institute. To register, call 604-529-1552, ext. 231.

We Have Joined The:
**NEW WESTMINSTER
CRIME FREE
MULTI-HOUSING
PROGRAM**



**Keeping Illegal Activity
Out of Rental Property**

New Westminster Police – What is your Emergency?

by Norvena MacFarlane, NWPS Dispatcher

As residential managers, you will at some point in your career be calling the police to assist you with incidents that arise from your buildings. Thankfully, many members of the Crime Free Multi-Housing have followed the advice of the program director Veronika Metchie, and participate in efforts to reduce crime in New Westminster. These incidents vary from serious calls, such as domestic violence, assaults, or anything in progress with a potential of injury or death, to minor calls such as bylaw offences, which include noise and parking issues.

As professional public safety telecommunicators, it is our job to take as much accurate information as possible from callers so that we can render assistance to citizens in need. Help mitigate crisis situations, and determine what response is necessary to ensure the safety of the caller as well as the emergency personnel responding.

Calls received are dispatched by priority. The more serious incidents are responded to as quickly as members are available, while minor incidents are queued.

Telecommunicators must calmly break the caller's hysteria threshold and skillfully apply journalistic, investigative approach of asking who, what, where, when, why, and how, plus vital information about weapons. Their calm and professional handling of calls can save lives, and their ability to anticipate, and swiftly gather and relay information, prepares and protects the emergency responders who depend on them.

Information that should be obtained on every call includes:

- Exact nature of incident
- Location of incident, location of caller
- Building, floor, apartment number, nearest intersection or landmark
- Telephone number caller is calling from
- Whether or not anyone is in danger
- Name of caller, call back number (full particulars including date of birth)
- Description of vehicle, such as color, year, make, model, license, style, distinguishing marks, number of occupants
- Description of persons, will include race, sex, age, height, weight, clothing, scars, identifying marks, etc.
- Direction of travel.

If all else fails in obtaining the information, we invoke the old dispatch adage for determining if a response is required.

**WHEN IN DOUBT, SEND THEM OUT
DISPATCHERS SAVE SECONDS ... SECONDS SAVE LIVES!**

Why Use a Credit Report?

Managing a rental property can be a risky business, particularly if you get a prospective tenant that is intent on committing illegal activity. The rise in identity theft leaves many apartment managers vulnerable who accept applicants based solely on the information provided by the applicant. Many times friends or associates act as references for employment and previous tenancies.

The best way to protect against being scammed is requesting a Credit Report. This report helps identify an individual by comparing the name and personal information on the application form to the information on the credit report. The report will list current and previous employers, as well as credit accounts, outstanding balances, pay patterns, bankruptcies, liens, and collection items. The credit agencies, Equifax and Trans Union, will provide a score that evaluates risk based on credit history. They will also alert you if a fraud has been committed using this identity.

Tenant Verification Services Inc. (TVS) is a credit-reporting agency that serves the needs of the residential rental industry by providing fraud prevention tools that target delinquent tenants. TVS also checks applications against their "Delinquent Tenant List" which identifies tenants with outstanding monetary claims.

TVS, a BBB member, also offers a discounted rate (nearly 25%) to properties that are fully certified in the CFMH program. This is a must-have tool in your management kit. Contact TVS at 604-576-3004 or www.tenantverification.com for more information.

Protect Your Mail & Identity

Mail theft is at the forefront of concern for everyone: private citizens, business owners and landlords alike. In most cases, the mailbox panels are easily pried open and the mail is stolen. The crown lock (Canada Post) is also often stolen, allowing the production of counterfeit keys. There are a number of ways to secure the panels, but the letter carriers will only use one key to open the panel.

Once the mail has been delivered, it is no longer the property of Canada Post. Steps should be taken to ensure that your property is providing a safe receptacle for delivery of the mail and remind residents to do the following:

- Pick up mail as soon as possible after delivery.
 - When on vacation, have a trusted friend pick the mail up daily or use Canada Post's Hold Mail Service.
 - If you receive mail that is not yours, write "delivered to wrong address" or "not at this address" on the envelope and deposit in a Canada Post mailbox. Do not leave the mail unattended in the lobby.
 - Do not let strangers into the building.
 - Immediately notify the building manager or Police of any suspicious activity at the mailboxes.
- Contact Canada Post at 1-800-267-1177 if mailboxes are left open.



Bell Locksmith has developed a lock that secures existing mailboxes with steel carriage bolts, preventing the mailbox from being forced open while the crown lock is engaged. With a patent pending on the H-4600 lock, there have been no reports of theft or further break-ins once installed. *Bell Locksmith* also offers a 10% discount on installation of the locks to properties that are fully certified in the CFMH program. Contact *Bell Locksmith* for more information at 604-467-4957 or www.preventmailtheft.ca (a member of BBB).

Housing Seniors: A Resource for Building Managers

Do you have seniors living in your building that are having difficulty coping? As people age, they experience many changes which may affect their health, income, or social support network. Loss of friends and lack of mobility may make it harder to get out and meet new people. All of these changes are important for a building manager to be aware of; as the manager may be the only contact a senior has with the

outside world. The changes may also negatively affect their tenancy.

The Seniors Housing Information Program (SHIP) provides information, including free workshops, on housing and related services to seniors. Located in New Westminster, they have produced a handbook on the types of issues renting seniors and managers face including: *Non-payment of Rent, Hoarding or Collecting, Refusing Assistance,*

Accidentally Setting Fires, and Conflicts With Other Tenants. The book offers suggestions and resource leads for the manager who may be facing a choice of evicting a long-term tenant that becomes unmanageable because of age. The booklet is available online at <http://www.seniorshousing.bc.ca/BuildingManagersBooklet.PDF> or from their office at Royal Square Mall, #209-800 McBride Blvd, ph. 604-520-6621.

New Privacy Act (PIPA)

by Dean P. Davison LLB., M.B.A. C.F.E.

Privacy is becoming a growing concern throughout the world and as of January 1, 2004 is of paramount importance for all businesses in BC. This article will provide a brief overview of the new British Columbia Privacy Act for members of the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program. This is a general overview of the new privacy act and should not be taken as legal advice. All situations are unique and it is my recommendation that you seek specific legal advice for each situation.

As of January 1, 2004

In January 2004, the BC Legislature passed into law the *Protection of Personal Information Act (PIPA)*. Prior to 2004 the privacy legislation in Canada was mostly designed to control the manner in which City, Provincial, and Federal governments collect, hold and disseminate personal information. *PIPA* now encompasses all organizations in BC not included in other privacy acts. As an apartment owner or manager you are now subject to the provisions of *PIPA* and as such, you should know what obligation *PIPA* places on you and how to fulfill them.

The purpose of the new privacy Act is to govern the collection, use and disclosure of personal information by private organizations. It also addresses how you should protect someone's information when it is in your control. In addition, the Act outlines the mandatory access a person has to their information while it is in your control. Lastly, *PIPA* provides that you must have a privacy policy accessible to the public if requested and a designated privacy officer.

Documents & Personal Information

As *PIPA* regulates an organization's use of "personal information documents", it is essential to understand what is contemplated by a "document" and "per-

sonal information" within the Act. A document includes anything on or by which information is stored in electronic or similar form, which essentially encompasses anything written down or recorded. It does not, however, apply to conversations or things not recorded.

Personal information is defined in *PIPA* as information about an identifiable individual. This means information that allows you to identify an individual. For example, a rental application, videotape or audiotape could fall under the Act if you could identify an individual from looking at these documents. It is important to note that *PIPA* is concerned with collection, use and disclosure, as such if you do not record or collect the information; your actions may not be subject to the provisions of the Act.

Next Column

In future columns I will review how to comply with *PIPA*. I will explain the different forms and types of consent you need to function as an organization, important exceptions to the *PIPA* and the fines involved with non-compliance. Lastly, we will review what happens if someone complains about your practices to the privacy commissioner and what you can do about it.

It may appear that the *PIPA* was created to make your life more difficult but compared to other privacy legislation within Canada, it does a good job of balancing legitimate business interests with reasonable privacy requirements.

Dean P. Davison, MBA, LLB, CFE is articling at *Watson Geopel Maledy*, a full service law firm, located in Vancouver. He can be contacted at ddavison@wgmlaw.com or 604-609-3097. Prior to law school he worked in the private sector in operations for a Fortune 500 company. He has recently become a certified fraud examiner and his current focus is in privacy and employment law. Dean has given numerous seminars and been published in the area of privacy law.



The Crime Free Multi-Housing Program is designed to help owners, managers, and residents of multi-unit rental property work with the police and other agencies to keep illegal and nuisance activity off such property. The result of this team effort is a safer, more habitable environment in which to live.

The program consists of three phases:

- Phase One:* Residential Managers attend an 8-hour workshop
- Phase Two:* Meet minimum requirements from a Security Assessment
- Phase Three:* Management hosts an annual Resident Safety Social.

Following completion of all three phases, the management will earn the privilege of posting signs on the property and using the CFMH Program logo in advertising.

For more information, contact:

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